

### CONTINUES TO WORK FOR CONSENSUS ON FOREST MANAGEMENT

WASHINGTON, DC – Representative Peter DeFazio (OR-04) on Friday led a field tour of federal forests managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) near Roseburg. DeFazio helped organize the tour to encourage dialogue between federal agencies, the timber industry, and environmental groups on the future of managing federal forests in western Oregon. Approximately 50 stakeholders, community members, federal and state agency heads, and Obama administration officials attended.

In July, 2009 Interior Secretary Salazar administratively withdrew the Western Oregon Plan Revisions (WOPR), aimed at dramatically increasing logging on 2.6 million acres of federal forests. Salazar promised to supply an interim supply of timber to timber-dependent communities as the Obama administration worked on a long-term forest plan to replace WOPR.

To date, the BLM has struggled to produce the interim timber supply needed to sustain rural jobs and the timber infrastructure that supports rural communities. The Medford and Roseburg BLM districts, which typically supply much of the wood for mills from Roseburg to the California border, have only generated 10-15% of the volume promised by Secretary Salazar in 2009.

DeFazio convened a meeting in Springfield in early July to discuss ideas for developing a productive and responsible forest management plan for western Oregon. BLM managers, representatives of the timber industry, environmental activists, and scientists Norm Johnson (Oregon State University) and Jerry Franklin (University of Washington) participated in the meeting. The July group agreed to participate in a forest field tour to look at various scientific-based forest management strategies backed by Johnson and Franklin.

“The status quo is unacceptable,” DeFazio said. “Hundreds of thousands of acres of federal forests in western Oregon are unhealthy and need responsible management. Rural communities are losing infrastructure, jobs, and hope. We’ve got to do better. Restoring our public forests would create much needed jobs, provide economic certainty for timber-dependent communities and improve the health of the forests.”

DeFazio said there were multiple goals of Friday's tour: "It's one thing to sit around a table in an air-conditioned room talking about forest policy, but it's more important and constructive to get people in the woods to look at what's possible, try to agree and what we want the forests to look like, and then we can roll up our sleeves and figure out how to get there."

"We've got to get people involved in forest management," continued DeFazio. "These are public forests, we all own them and should have a say in how they're managed. I wanted people to come out and ask questions, challenge the experts, and decide for themselves how public lands should be managed. That's exactly what happened on Friday. There were challenging questions and a constructive dialogue between participants. This is a complicated and often divisive issue. But I see an opportunity. I think Oregonians are getting pretty frustrated by the false starts and broken promises."

DeFazio has been an outspoken critic of President Clinton's Northwest Forest Plan, which went into effect in 1994. At the time, DeFazio argued the plan would not protect the remaining old growth in the Pacific Northwest leading to more costly and time consuming litigation and would fail to offer a predictable supply of timber to timber-dependent communities. To date, the Northwest Forest Plan has never reached predicted levels of timber volume and much of the Northwest's forest policy has been dictated by federal judges.

Since the mid-1990s, DeFazio has offered an alternative to the Northwest Forest Plan, but the plan was been rejected by the timber industry and environmentalists. He continues to offer a compromise plan he says will increase the timber supply while simultaneously protecting Oregon's old growth.

While DeFazio said he doesn't expect a resolution at this time, "this meeting is a key step in bringing an understanding about desired outcomes between key stakeholder groups."